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ABSTRACT

Techniques of cognitive behavior modification such as cognitive restructuring have recently been employed in behavior therapy. Other procedures which fall within the approach of cognitive behavior therapy are techniques such as paradoxical intention which are subsumed under the title of logotherapy. Logotherapy refers to a form of psychotherapy or counseling which operates through developing a meaningful life. There is an emphasis on synthesizing psychodynamic approaches, existentialist views, and a broad learning theory or cognitive behavior modification perspective. In response to unemployment, individuals may react with wrong passivity, wrong activity, right passivity, or right activity. In cases where an active response to unemployment is limited, logotherapeutic techniques such as paradoxical intention may be used to stimulate the right passive approach to the problems of unemployment. Paradoxical intention asks clients to experience the anxiety of their unemployment and to exaggerate the tensions associated with unemployment in an attempt to assist clients in developing changes in their attitudes and reactions to stress. This approach may prove useful in addressing career guidance problems in vocational services. (NB)

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INFORMATION PAPER

A PARADOXICAL INTENTION : A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF A COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY APPROACH AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR COUNSELLING

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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NSW Department of Industrial Relations

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PREFACE

One recent development within behaviour therapy are the techniques of cognitive behaviour modification, such as cognitive restructuring. These methods assume that clinical disorders and personal problems are the result of maladaptive or faulty thought patterns. The counsellor's task is to substitute more adaptive cognitions.

In his rational-emotive therapy, Ellis (1970) asserts that emotional disorders are the result of irrational assumptions. That is, the person's perception of experience distorts an objective reality and treatment consists of persuasion and logical reasoning directed towards altering irrational beliefs. A second variation developed by Meichenbaum (1977) is for the counsellor to identify maladaptive thoughts and to model appropriate behaviour accompanied by constructive self-instructions. Verbal-cognitive rehearsal is used extensively in this approach. A third variation is Beck's (1976) cognitive therapy which includes specific activity schedules, graded tasks, and behavioural assignments aimed at facilitating an independent approach to emotion-arousing events.

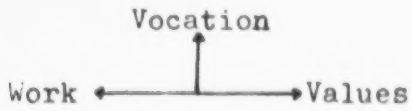
There are a number of other procedures which fall within the conceptualisation and approach of cognitive behaviour therapy. Amongst these are the techniques such as paradoxical intention which are subsumed under the title of logotherapy. Some of the background of logotherapy is described for the general information of counsellors. To the best of my knowledge, there has not been any direct application of this cognitive approach to career guidance problems in Vocational Services.

INTRODUCTION

Logotherapy refers to a form of psychotherapy or counselling, which operates through developing a meaningful life. In this approach there is an emphasis on synthesizing psychodynamic approaches, existentialist views and a broad learning theory or cognitive behaviour modification perspective.

The focus of logotherapy is on the future, the assignments to be fulfilled by the individual in his/her future, and re-orienting the individual toward their own purpose-in-life. The search is not for an abstract meaning; rather experience, through actions or deeds, emotions or feelings, and misfortunes serve to assist in the discovery of personal meaning (Frankl, 1962, p.96). Thus, logotherapy seeks to make people conscious of their responsibility.

This existential analysis tries to bring together three factors to avoid a vacuum in life. These are (a) work (the actual job) (b) vocation (the unique personal tasks in life) and (c) the three values (creative, experiential, attitudinal).



The individual is perceived as responsible for actualising these values and for fulfilling a unique task in life.

However, what is the situation in times of unemployment? Four of the many possible approaches or reactions to unemployment are summarised below:-

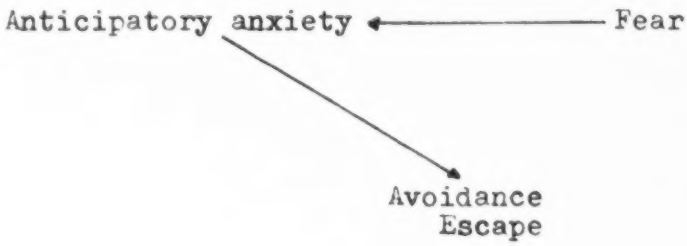
I.	Wrong passivity		Withdrawal from those situations (eg job interviews) in which the person expects his/her fear to recur
II.	Wrong activity	(a)	The individual struggles against ideas and thoughts (eg hopelessness) and thus reinforces them
		(b)	The individual struggles for a job rather than against unemployment
III.	Right passivity		Ridicules his/her reactions to unemployment rather than either trying to flee (eg fear) or fight (eg compulsions)
IV.	Right activity		Focussing attention away from the self. Re-oriented to unique meanings in his/her life.

Where the opportunity to develop an active response to unemployment is limited, then logotherapeutic techniques such as paradoxical intention may stimulate the <u>right passive</u> approach to unemployment's problems.

Paradoxical Intention

Paradoxical intention assists clients to develop changes in their attitudes and reactions to stressful situations such as unemployment. In paradoxical intention, clients are asked to stop trying to evade, or cope with their symptoms. Instead they are asked to arouse their symptons deliberately, to wish for them and even to exaggerate them.

The person coping with the stresses of prolonged unemployment is told to "bring on" the anxiety and to exaggerate the tensions associated with unemployment. Using intention, the client is deliberately coaxed nearer to the emotional locus and psychological nidus of the stressful situation. They find that intention cannot arouse the stress and that they are able to confront the situation. This procedure is analogous to therapeutic flooding techniques which expose clients to the feared situations and attempts to counteract the influence of anticipatory anxiety.



Since there is no voluntary control over anticipatory anxiety and its autonomic components (Gerz, 1962), then intention can be used to inhibit fears.

There are no specific steps or routine therapeutic procedures in logotherapy. At best, paradoxical intention can be contrasted with the technique of de-reflection. In de-reflection, the individual's attention is turned from his/her reaction to the situation towards the problem at hand. This involves a re-orientation to their goals and confrontation with their objectives.

An essential component of this approach is the necessity to understand the client in terms of his/her life history and current conflicts. The client is helped to comprehend the context of their actions, but at the same time to focus attention away from themselves in order to release self-centred interests (Frankl 1967, p.53). Paradoxical intention is not claimed as a panacea for phobias, obsessions or compulsions put its rated effectiveness is success in 75.7% of cases treated (Frankl 1967, p.145).

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